



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SOUTHCOM releases USS Nassau ARG/24 MEU, adds logistics capability to Unified Response

MIAMI -- U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) released three U.S. Navy ships and 2,300 Marines from their duties in support of Operation Unified Response today.

The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Nassau (LHA 4), amphibious transport dock ship USS Mesa Verde (LPD 19) and the amphibious dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) make up the Nassau Amphibious Ready Group (ARG). The group includes 2,000 Sailors and 31 fixed and rotary-wing aircraft.

The ARG and 24th MEU arrived in Haiti Jan. 23 to support U.S. government relief efforts during the initial stages of the humanitarian mission.

During their deployment, Marines from the 24 MEU assisted the World Food Program (WFP) with the delivery of more than 8,783 bags of rice for earthquake survivors at distribution points near Carrefour and Maison Lecrai. According to the WFP, each bag of rice delivered can feed a family of five for two weeks.

Medical and dental personnel from the MEU, working alongside Navy Corpsmen, treated earthquake survivors in Anse-a-Galets and evacuated 16 Haitian citizens to the USS Nassau for medical treatment. Marines from the MEU also delivered more than 30,000 bottles of water, 117,000 individual meals and 2,600 pounds of medical supplies.

Fixed and rotary wing aircraft from the Nassau ARG and the MEU flew 239 missions in direct support of Operation Unified Response to aid communities affected by the earthquake in northern and southwestern portions of Haiti and the island of Gonave.

The Marines also assisted Joint Task Force-Haiti with the construction of a 250-bed, interim care facility in Port-au-Prince that, once fully operational, will transition to the U.S. Agency for International Development and utilized to provide follow-on care for convalescent patients recovering from surgeries.

“Thanks to the expeditionary capabilities of this amphibious ready group and the 24th MEU, we were able to help the government of Haiti, UN and international relief workers mitigate the impact of this

earthquake on communities across Haiti,” said Air Force Gen. Douglas Fraser, Commander of SOUTHCOM. “The increasing contributions and capabilities of U.S. and international relief organizations now in Haiti with extensive expertise in helping nations recover from disasters have reduced the need for the capabilities of the 24th MEU. They will continue the critical relief efforts so needed to help Haiti recover. I am releasing these sailors and Marines with our utmost gratitude for their timely support to this important humanitarian mission.”

More than 2,500 Sailors and 2,200 Marines from the Bataan ARG and 22nd MEU will remain off the Haitian coast and will continue supporting humanitarian assistance operations in areas severely impacted near the epicenter of the Jan. 12 earthquake.

The Bataan ARG includes the multipurpose amphibious assault ship USS Bataan (LHD 5), as well as the amphibious dock landing ships USS Carter Hall (LSD 50) and USS Fort McHenry (LSD 43).

A team of approximately 2,000 military logisticians from Army installations nationwide will replace the over-the-shore capabilities of the outgoing Nassau ARG and provide robust sea-based and land-based logistical support to the ongoing relief efforts under the direction of Joint Task Force-Haiti.

The team will form a Joint Logistics Command capable of supporting the movement of donated aid from ports of entry to distribution points throughout the country and will be equipped with landing craft, cargo handling equipment, transport vehicles and other resources that will sustain the logistical needs of the operation.

“This added logistical component will boost the ongoing relief efforts to help Haitian citizens overcome the effects of this disaster on their lives,” said U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. Michael Dana, senior Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Advisor for SOUTHCOM. “The command has with it the moving and transport equipment needed to get supplies from the ports to the people quickly. At this point in the international relief effort, logistics plays an important role in helping the humanitarian assistance efforts progress, and we are glad to help with this added capability.”

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For VIDEO of Operation Unified Response visit:

http://www.dvidshub.net/?script=media/media_tags.php&tag=haiti-relief&table=video

For PHOTOS of Operation Unified Response:

<http://www.defenseimagery.mil/imagery.html#a=collection&cid=4917784>